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Ministry of Forests and Range

PROVINCE TO REFOREST BEETLE-ATTACKED AREAS

WILLIAMS LAKE – Next summer, the Province will plant 3.2 million tree seedlings in the Williams Lake and Quesnel areas in response to the mountain pine beetle epidemic, adding to the significant amount of reforestation being conducted by forest companies, announced Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman.

"We're focusing on restoring ecosystems that have been affected by the mountain pine beetle," said Coleman. "By planting trees in locations that are not being commercially harvested, we are addressing environmental needs, like water flow and animal habitat, and growing a future timber supply."

In 2008, an estimated 4,000 hectares will be planted by the Province in the Williams Lake and Quesnel timber supply areas. Preparation of planting sites, including danger tree falling, will occur this summer. As well, another 8,000 hectares of beetle-attacked stands will be surveyed during 2007 in preparation for planting in future years.

B.A. Blackwell and Associates will administer the reforestation activities within the Williams Lake and Quesnel timber supply areas. The work will be performed by both private contractors and First Nations.

"This is just the beginning of our reforestation efforts in the Cariboo," said Coleman. "We've done the mapping and the planning, and ordered the seedlings. Now we are ready to get going on the ground."

In British Columbia, areas that are commercially harvested must be reforested. As a result of pine beetle salvage harvesting, it's estimated that forest companies will plant about 12.6 million seedlings in the Williams Lake timber supply area and 26.5 million seedlings in the Quesnel area in 2007.

In 2005, the Province established the reforestation program Forests for Tomorrow to reforest the areas hardest hit by the mountain pine beetle epidemic and the 2003 and 2004 wildfires. The majority of the initial $161-million fund will pay for tree seed and seedlings, site preparation and planting. Funds will also go towards fertilization, planning, mapping, research and monitoring.

Restoring forest resources is a key objective of the Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan, the Province's strategic response to dealing with the impacts of the infestation, and ensuring sustainability for forests, communities and the provincial economy. For more information on the updated Mountain Pine Beetle Action Plan, visit www.gov.bc.ca/pinebeetle.

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